

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

Volume 16 - No. 1

November 21, 1975

Chicago, Illinois

An Educational Group

VOLUME 16.

Sixteen years of trying to "keep in touch". Don't ask me why? I just happen to be that kind of a person - but there does come a time to stop. After this issue the Bulletins will be mailed to those we hear from now and then. Of necessity, the Bulletin of late has been written mostly by myself - it gets harder to get others to write, even when they have much to say. Other contributors in the past have been BENTLEY STONE, STEVE PRIMIS, WILLIAM MOORE, JOHN SHARPE, LILLIAN MOORE, JULIE WALDER, LORETTA ROZAK and LEO KERSLEY. There are those who do appreciate the Bulletin and they are mostly old friends and for them I shall continue in a limited way.

For this issue will repeat a few of the early articles on dance personalities who made dance history. For those who do not know where Fullersburg, Illinois is - it is the suburb of Hinsdale.

A recent visitor, LYNN RITCHIE, is now a Fashion designer who divides her time between New York, San Francisco and New Delhi India. Lynn was a student in the school from 1960 through 1963. BARBARA BUBENSTEIN is now performing nightly at the Blackstone Theatre in "Bubbling Brown Sugar" which from all reports is a real hit show on its way to New York. When the Opera season lets up a bit we will be attending. NICOLE FINITZO one of the three "strawberry red headed Italians" who grew up in the school is now bonafide Lawyer with a large local Law firm. Her sister, MARIE FINITZO took that great set of photographs of class work two years ago. We were not surprised to hear that KAREN TIMS had married last August in Holland. The lucky boy is a choreographer with the Netherlands Dance Theatre. CYNTHIA BENSON recently left for Florida to be married towards the middle of November with only families attending. CHRISTOPHER ADAMS

will be partnering DOLORES LIPINSKI for several "Nutcracker" performances for MARY JOYCE LIND in and about Des Moines, Iowa around the holidays. ANN ROSS in for a few days from New York, where she has been working off-Broadway shows. Not too long ago she worked with ELAINE PETRICOFF a summer pupil a few years back. The recent full-page spread of photos (not approved by us) attracted more attention than any publicity we have been fortunate to get in years. Perry Riddle is one of Daily News' top photographers and no doubt has a different conception of a good picture than we do. MADELENE HARGADON recently had another short stay in 'intensive care' at Weiss Memorial Hospital. An early diagnosis thought it was a muscle spasm and would correct itself soon. 1976 will be another big year for the School with the return of both JOAN LAWSON, of London, and KIRSTEN RALOV, of Copenhagen. This is continuing our policy of bringing Europe to you. In addition, there will be a three day course on the Teaching of Character for teachers and those who are approaching the teaching profession. It will offer a definitive method on the approach one should use to Character, which is rapidly becoming a lost art. This will be the last and only time this course will be given. A special brochure is at the printer now with the plans for 1976.

DANCE PERSONALITIES

LOIE FULLER

One of the very great innovators in the dance and theatre world, known as "The Fairy of Light", was born in Fullersburg, Illinois. It was an unusually cold winter, and as her parents lived on an isolated farm, they went into town and requisitioned the only room possessing a stove capable of throwing out heat, which happened to be the bar room. This according to Loie Fuller (The Fairy of Light),

was in 1870. She maintained she came into the world with a cold she never got rid of.

I have tried in vain to find Fullersburg on the map -- regardless, her story certainly sounds like our Illinoisian climate.

Loie began her theatrical life as a temperance lecturer at the early age of 15 -- this was followed by seasons in stock companies as an actress, usually playing boys' parts. She toured a season with Buffalo Bill, sang "Faust" at Hooley's Opera House in 1884 and was one compared in a performance of "Camille" to Sarah Bernhardt.

Her career as a dancer began almost accidentally while playing in a play at the Harlem Opera House while rehearsing for "Quack M.D." She desired an affect of mysterious hypnotic attraction and began experimenting with a filmy voluminous silk skirt. The end result was her famous skirt dance. This began her period of experiment with moving draperies and the affect of changing light upon them.

This phase of her life took her all over the world, where she was a sensation in Berlin, Paris and other large capitals. She attracted and inspired many artists of her time and many painters painted her and her dances.

From this haphazard beginning of experiment and chance evolved the broken color impressionism that artists like Monet and Seurat became exponents of.

The fame of Loie Fuller, actress, dancer, and dabbler in the sciences, can rest on the fact that she was the first to utilize, if not to invent, many features of modern stage lighting. Indirect cross-beams and variations of direct electrical illumination were characteristic features of her earliest performances. She anticipated and experimented with the use of cold light by use of luminous salts. Her influence is apparent today in every branch of the theatrical arts.

ENRICO CECCHETTI by Walter Camryn

The name Cecchetti, for me, has long been synonymous with dance. Long before I even knew about ballet, a book came into my hands -- an autobiography of Cecchetti. I've never seen the book since, but I remember it so clearly I do not believe it is a figment of my fertile imagination. The book must have existed. In it Enrico told of his early dance and theatrical life -- long before he became the famous teacher we know of today.

His father, Cesare, and his mother, Serafina had been dancers. In fact, it was a family of dancers. Enrico, born in 1850 had made his first performance at the early age of 5. In this book he spoke of the family's early theatrical tours and much about the trials and tribulations of the theatre of that day. It never has been an easy life; it was harder then.

Enrico's parents, after considerable effort to interest him in a formal education, finally gave up when he was 13. At this time, he was placed in an Academy of Dance in Florence, where he studied under Giovanni Lepri, a former pupil of the great Carlo Blasis. From this time on, there was little doubt in the parents' minds as to what his profession would be. He was to dance from the age of 16 to a very old age, creating many of the great roles we know today; and in the end to become one of the great teachers of all time, leaving a system to guide others.

It may have been this similarity of his early schooling to mine (except that mine was agriculture) that first impressed him on my mind. At this time I did love to dance but was only familiar with square dancing, ball-room and basque dances..but, never the less, dance. We all know that the original source of any interest is devious and hard to trace.

About two years later after reading this book I had thrown all caution to the wind and had begun a career of my own in the dance. I had become a pupil of Adolph Bolm who at that time had a school in the Blum building on Michigan Blvd.

Bolm's name was magic to me for I had read a great deal about his earlier life in dance and knew that he was a pupil of the great Cecchetti.

Bolm often spoke of Cecchetti and his work in our classes and of the many great dancers who were trained by the master. Names such as Pavlowa, Fokine, Egorova, Karsavina, Kshesinskaya, Lopokova, Nijinska, Trefilova, Preobrajenskava, Idzikowsky, Massine and the great Nijinsky, were tossed off in class from time to time mentioning each of their good qualities. One of my very favorite old photos is a backstage one taken in Lausanne in 1915 of some members of the Diagheley Ballet. Directly behind the Master is a young Bolm and at his left knee a young Massine. These two men have always held my greatest admiration- Bolm as an inspiring teacher and artist and Massine for his great contribution in choreography.

It is difficult to start out talking about Cecchetti and not end up talking about some one else because his influence is so great a part of every dancer, teacher, or creator, whether they know it or not, (usually they do not). His work and method is so integrated into the curriculum of every school in the world today without being labeled as such that few know the Cecchetti method from the Russian.

I was in class at Bolm's that November day in 1928 when the news of Cecchetti's death was cabled to Bolm from London. The class ceased at this point and we all sat and listened to Mr. Bolm reminisce of his many happy days in the Diaghelev Ballet where Cecchetti was the official instructor. Specific things said I do not remember, only, the great regard he had for his master impressed me on that day. Since that day I have gotten to know many other great teachers with this same regard for this master.

We have here in America an organization dedicated to teaching the principles that Cecchetti established.

In 1931 the Cecchetti Council of America was incorporated in Lansing, Michigan and since that time the organization has grown in importance from year to year. Two people stand out in my mind when one speaks of the Council - those are Theodore Smith and Gertrude Edwards Jory. The success of any group is always the result of collective energies spent freely, I am certain many people are responsible for its success. However, the insistent drive was supplied in the beginning by Mr. Smith and in more recent years by Miss Jory. She is their ambassador at large. It's our privilege to have her with us this summer.

Many people claim to know the method and to teach it. It is also true that there are many interpretations on its values. This is bound to happen when a method has passed from the hands of its originator. We all know teachers who have no right to be teaching. We also know a local teacher who said she had a Russian top and a Cecchetti bottom. She also has French arms and an English Temperament and can not coordinate any two parts of her anatomy - let alone teach others!

So it is very good that we have in the profession a teacher like Miss Jory, who does so much good work with teachers all over the country presenting to them a method that has been tried and proven for many generations.

ANNA PAVLOWA - 1882-1931

Almost 30 years have passed since the miracle of Anna Pavlowa's dancing finally came to an end but the heritage of this great artist is still a moving force in the dance today. Her name is still a household word and we owe most of the popularity of ballet today to her. She appeared on most of the stages of the world, leaving a memory of her art in the great theatres of the largest cities and in the smaller towns too. Pavlowa performed with most of the great dancers of her time - Mordkin, Novikoff, and Volinine of the imperial Ballet of Moscow; Fokine,

Bolm, Nijinsky and Vladimiroff of her own St. Petersburg Academy.

Theodore Stier, her musical director from 1910 to 1925, in giving an account of the extensiveness of their tours together, wrote that in the course of his sixteen years association with Pavlowa he travelled 300,000 miles, conducted 3650 performances and over 2000 rehearsals.

Cyril W. Beaumont, London critic and writer wrote, "Pavlowa danced with her whole body, from the crown of her head to the tip of her toe. She danced with such abounding vitality, with such ecstasy of the spirit; she surrendered herself so completely to the mood of the dance; that she became a being transformed."

"She was first and last a great individual artist, a complete unity in herself, who had the supreme power of not only being able to breathe into a dance her own flame-like spirit, but, no matter how many times she had danced it before, to invest it with an air of spontaneity, novelty, and freshness, as though it had but just been born. She was something more than a great artist-dancer. She made her features speak and her body sing."

ISADORA DUNCAN - 1878 - 1927

Once in each generation there appears a maverick in the art world. One who breaks every convention of society, living freely and coining their own set of rules. Often we are indebted to these mavericks for a new vision and a new set of ideas. We are then forced to discard old worn out conventions, setting forth a new spurt of creativity in the arts. Isadora Duncan was one of these mavericks, who in her time freed the dance from meaningless movement and gave it new heart and new life. We have again reached a sterile and mediocre period - hence the new interest in Duncan.

She was born in San Francisco California of Irish parentage. Her mother, a music teacher gave her a superior appreciation of music and from this, her feeling for motion in relation to music. As a child she did study ballet as it was taught in that day which probably was none too good and reason enough for any child to rebel against it - which she did. She began to express herself in dance in her original way. Without much formal education she was self educated to a remarkable degree.

In 1899 there was a debut, dancing in Chicago without success. After this she and her family went to Europe where she danced in Paris with more appreciation. This success brought engagements in other cities - Budapest - Berlin - Florence and other cities. In 1904 she established a school in Berlin and two years later did her first program with pupils from this school. She at this time became clearer in her ideas and called her dance simply "free dance."

If we regard the dance as an independent art form, we must recall that in the late 19th Century it had arrived at a point of utter mechanization and complete hopelessness as to content matter. It was no longer a medium of revitalizing entertainment, but a mere exhibition of brilliantly trained bodies. Heart and essence of the dance experience was lost and the dance degenerated into a meaningless show. It lacked instinctive and absolute conviction. Only Duncan's appearance restored this lack of belief. All her interpretations carried a message revealed the glory of a full experience.

In 1905 Duncan made her first appearance in Russia which started long and heated discussions in the ballet world, which eventually brought about the reforms in ballet by the choreographer Michael Fokine. Fokine first used this influence in a ballet called "Eunice" with his dancers in Greek tunics and barefoot. This influence was to flower more fully in a later ballet "Les Sylphides" as we know it today.

The dancer's body, in its natural shape form, line and curves, is the very

instrument for the expression of emotion. Isadora had an ideal body. Even if her technic was not superb, her motor skill was the result of intensive preparation and she was certainly one of the most able in projection to her audience whatever she wanted to express. She had discovered to her complete satisfaction that the solar plexus was the bodily habitation of the soul and the center in which inner impulse was translated into movement. This search for motivation brought her to basic emotional laws considering joy, sorrow, devotion, and freedom in terms of pantomime.

Nature inspired her dance compositions, for "man's culture is the making use of forces connected with nature at its roots". More even than a philosopher, Isadora was able to install the meaning of all life and to strive for the ultimate expression of a people living in the fullest sense of the word. She studied Plato, Sophocles, and Euripides, but also received inspiration from Shakespeare and Whitman; through them her creative mind was spurred on to still higher aims.

Europe hailed Isadora; it hailed her honest and courageous attachment on the dance of the time, and it was not interested in her technic; but only with the message she conveyed.

Though the U.S. at first received her coldly, she returned to her mother country at various times in 1909, 1911, 1917 and 1922 -- that last time, being under the impresario, Sol Hurok.

She prophesied that fifty years after her death a monument would be built for her. Less than thirty-two years have passed and the prophecy is already beginning to be fulfilled. The monument, however, is not the conventional tribute in stone which she foresaw, but a body of living dance freely acknowledging her as its source.

Isadora Duncan died tragically near Nice, France, on September 14, 1927, as a result of a weird accident. The end of a long scarf which she was wearing around her neck, while taking a trip in an open automobile, got caught in the rear wheel of the car and strangled her.